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impression and general tendency of all his plays are thoroughly in harmony with the atmosphere and teaching of Scripture. The authority is unexceptionable for the opinion that "The homage which Shakespeare has everywhere paid to purity in thought, word and deed, and the sanctity which he has uniformly breathed into the souls and manners of his lovers, are among the purest and best influences in literature."

A SERMON OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST.

By Rev. F. W. C. MEYER,
New Haven, Conn.

The audience is made up of Jerusalemites, princes, priests, public officers and people in festal and fashionable assembly. There is considerable stir among them as to what that young prophet of noble blood is about to say. "He had better tarry at Jericho until his beard be grown," mutters a reputable soothsayer, eyeing the "boy preacher" as he approaches his stand. But while he is yet intimating, to one of the royal scribes before him, that the son of Amoz ought to let his father do the talking, a captivating strain vibrates upon his ear: "Brethren, it shall come to pass, in the future toward which you and I are looking, that the mountain on which rests Yahwé's house shall be preëminent among the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." That involuntarily electrifies the congregation. Here and there the lips of priest or elder are moving inaudibly, accompanying the youthful speaker as he recites the rest of the most favorite passage of national parallelism. Its triverbal lines portray the nations of the earth acknowledging Jerusalem as the seat of religious instruction and bureau of arbitration in political difficulties, and with exquisite uniqueness describe the universal reign of peace ensuing.

"Amen! Amen!" all listeners enthusiastically shout. And their look glides wistfully toward Moriah's temple summit, the jewel in the crown of the world's prospective capital. But the prophet's glance is checked by the gay and gaudy attire of the throng before him, more fit to revel at an Assyrian banquet than to worship in Zion's sanctuary. The enthusiasm with which he set out gives way to pleading tones of pathos; "O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of Yahwé! We are in anything but a proper condition at present of realizing the lofty vision." And his pleading with men turns into prayer before God: "Yahwé, thou hast forsaken thy people, who, unmindful of their holy calling, ape Eastern customs, practise the black arts of the Philistines, and enter into foreign alliances. They spare no pains in the accumulation of wealth, are eager in securing the means of belligerent success and delight in worshipping detestable idols. Although it sink them all into the depths of ruin, they would rather imitate the heathen than follow out thy elevating principles; therefore forgive them not."

Was the last phrase too harsh? The prayer is followed by impressive summons to enter into the rocks and hide in the dust from before Yahwé's terrible majesty,—meaning of course that they would do so in the day the Divine Ruler had fixed to humble his subjects now so arrogant and self-conceited in their idolatry and luxury. Upon nature and inanimate objects the curse of being brought down is then pronounced. The lofty cedars of Lebanon, as well as the mighty oaks of Bashan; mountains, the natural strongholds, as well as artificial towers and fortifications; the ships of Tarshish and their desirable merchandise; in a word, all that haughty man delights in shall share in the humiliating process of that day, when Yahwé alone shall be exalted. The idols, very naturally, must utterly vanish. Their worshippers will be glad to leave them, though they be of gold and silver, in the caves and holes, wherein they vainly sought refuge from before the terror of the earth-rending Yahwé.

Nor will that process of humiliation spare the men who rule. Their bread and butter, fame and fortune, are not going to last forever. The political leaders, warriors, judges,

prophets, magicians, elders, captains, noblemen, counsellors, charmers and enchanters, will neither be nor have any source of support in that day. With puerile willfulness inefficient princes rule. The people strive only to oppress one another. Children as little respect their parents as the base know how to behave in presence of the honorable. And in the coming state of anarchy a man may take hold of his own brother and say: "Thou hast good clothing; be thou our kadi, and let the management of affairs be under thy hand." But the candidate shall deny the fact of possessing the necessities of life and decline the proffered magistracy. Another collapse of the Jewish polity must be the issue of words and acts in open rebellion against God. Upon men's faces you can read their sin. In cases that might be pointed out it is as flagrant as that of the Sodomites. Woe unto all who have wrought out evil for themselves. As surely as the righteous are rewarded for their well doing, the wicked shall be recompensed for their evil deeds. "Ah! my people," the prophet sighs, "you are lead into error and ruin by effeminate and incompetent rulers. Jahve will act as your attorney and their judge. The case of the elders and princes will be decided. It is they who are responsible for the injury and iniquity, saith Yahwé Zabaoth."

From the men the bold speaker then turns to the *women*, with revelations equally as startling, and surely anything but pleasing to the fair and fashionable sex. "Since the daughters of Zion are so proud, endeavoring only to attract attention upon the streets by their display of dress and affected demeanour, the Lord will make sore the crown of their head and publicly expose their shame. Then their anklets, fillets, crescents, earrings, bracelets, mufflers, headtires, ankle-chains, sashes, perfumery, amulets, rings, nose jewels, festal robes, mantles, shawls, satchels, hand mirrors, fine linen, turbans and veils, will have lost their attractiveness. Instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness; the girdle will be displaced by a rope; well set hair by baldness; the wrap by sackcloth; the pitiful garb of a captive will be the substitute for present finery and glitter. Lo! the women's supporters all slain in war. The warriors' widows and cities dolefully

mourning the loss. What an appalling sight it will be! No husbands then, fair ladies, for there shall be so few that seven women lay hold of one man, willing to support themselves, if only he will take away the reproach of childlessness."

"But in contrast to this imminent doom" the sun piercing through the gloomy veil as he resumes, "there follows a period of prosperity and exaltation for the escaped of Israel. Beautiful harvests will adorn the land and agricultural blessings abound. The residents of Jerusalem will be sanctified and purged of all iniquity. Yahwé, who now seems to have withdrawn his presence, will then be present as in the diurnal cloud of smoke and nocturnal flaming fire of old. Ample provision for the security and comfort of the Holy City's inhabitants and temple visitors will be made. They shall be protected against the vicissitudes of the weather in hospitable homes and under spacious canopies. Yea, God shall be present and protecting; the remnant prosperous and holy."

Patient reader, call this an effort to "Japhetize" a Semitic discourse, the authentic and parallelistic account of which please find among the earliest sermons of Isaiah. The unbroken bond between the sacred and secular, at the time of its delivery, allowed no distinction to be made between the true politician's platform and the earnest preacher's pulpit. Both were erected under some shady tree, or at an accessible street corner, or in the temple courts. From some such spot emanated all movements of reform in politics, morals and religion. No period could have been more transfigured and benefited by such reform, than the time in which the youthful Isaiah beheld his visions of the future, never lost sight of surrounding realities, and always confided in the final glorious issue.